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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 001024

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SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTORY CALL ON PRESIDENTIAL  
OFFICE SECRETARY GENERAL MARK CHEN, MARCH 24, 2006

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young. Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The people of Taiwan are committed to maintaining Taiwan's hard won freedoms, Presidential Officer Secretary General Mark Chen told the Director in their

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initial meeting on March 24. Mark Chen noted to the Director that President Chen would be less likely to cause future "surprises" if Taiwan feels secure that good relations with the U.S. will ensure the continued success of a free and democratic Taiwan. Mark Chen also said he believed that local criticism of TECRO's chief representative in Washington was due in part to transitions within the U.S. Government.  
End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Director paid an introductory call on Presidential Office Secretary General Mark Chen (Chen Tan Sun) on March 24. Mark Chen told the Director that most people in Taiwan view the United States as Taiwan's strongest friend. The United States is the only country that can protect Taiwan and its democratic institutions. He added that the President Chen believes strongly that Taiwan must maintain good relations with the U.S.

¶3. (C) The Director said to Mark Chen that, as he explained to President Chen, he had perceived a decline over the past several years in good will towards Taiwan within Washington circles. As a result, some in Washington are less tolerant than before over actions taken by Taiwan that could complicate U.S.-PRC relations. The tone of some American media reporting on issues such as the referendum and President Chen's pledges has further made some in the U.S. believe that Taiwan does not fully appreciate the importance our relationship. The Director added that he looked forward to working with Taiwan to ensure that the U.S.-Taiwan relationship does not continue to drift.

¶4. (C) Secretary General Chen acknowledged the Director's concerns. He told the Director that the vast majority of people in Taiwan are committed to maintaining Taiwan's freedoms and way of life. Mark Chen stressed that he and others had worked very hard to push for democratization in Taiwan, adding that Taiwan will do everything possible to prevent its democratic society from change caused by external forces. (Note: Chen served as Chairman of both the World

Federation of Taiwanese Associations and the Formosan Association for Public Affairs when he lived in the U.S. End note.) China's continuous efforts to isolate Taiwan and reduce U.S. influence in the region have led many people in Taiwan to feel insecure, said Chen. He added that President Chen would be less likely to do anything "surprising" if Taiwan feels assured that its good relations with the U.S. will ensure the protection of Taiwan's hard-fought freedoms.

Don't Shoot the Messenger

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¶5. (C) The Director noted to Secretary General Chen that David Lee, TECRO's Chief Representative in Washington, has been sharply criticized by some in the DPP, notably DPP legislator Trong Chai (Tsai Tong-Jung). This criticism stems from a perceived lack of effectiveness in policy advocacy. The Director added that he was concerned that this criticism could compromise TECRO's ability to accurately report back to Taipei about Washington's perceptions of Taiwan. He emphasized that many in Washington are concerned about what is happening in Taiwan and therefore it is important for Taiwan to have reporting from Washington that provides an accurate view of our perceptions. Mark Chen acknowledged that David Lee has been criticized by DPP legislators and agreed with the Director that having an accurate readout on what is happening in Washington is extremely important. He noted that some of Lee's perceived ineffectiveness may have resulted from transitions within the USG, notably the departures of NSC Senior Asia Director Michael Green and EAP DAS Randy Shriver.

YOUNG